

Utilizing Electronic Signatures and Electronic Form Filling to Streamline Document Approval Process

Certified Public Manager (CPM) Project

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Division of State Human Resources

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Division of State Human Resources (DSHR), formerly called the Office of Human Resources, is a South Carolina state agency that primarily provides support to other South Carolina state agencies concerning human resources issues through consultation and oversight, as well as professional development and alternative dispute resolution. In addition to the State Human Resources Director, the office is comprised of the following teams: Alternative Dispute Resolution (State Mediator Pool and State Grievance Process); Human Capital Management (Agency Consulting); Training and Development; Workforce Planning; and InfoSec/Privacy (Appendix A). Together, the DSHR teams strive to:

1. Develop sound human resources policies and procedures and effectively interpret governing laws, regulations, and policies;
2. Anticipate and plan for current and future workforce needs;
3. Recruit, develop, and retain talented employees to meet agencies missions;
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of agencies' structure and processes in order to maximize productivity; and
5. Mediate workplace matters.

II. DEFINITIONS

The attention of this CPM project focuses primarily on the role of the DSHR's agency consulting team within the Human Capital Management section. The agency consulting team is comprised of Human Resources (HR) Consultants who

are individually assigned to different state agencies. Their role is to analyze, interpret, and advise in the development and application of HR policies and procedures that comply with Federal and state regulations and statutes. In addition, they consult and collaborate with state agency representatives on classification, compensation, and employee relations matters.

The HR Consultants spend a percentage of their time reviewing classification and compensation documents, such as job reclassification requests, equivalency requests, PD updates, hire above midpoint requests, and promotional increase requests that are over 15% (Examples shown in Appendix B). In order to comprehend the significance of these types of requests, it is necessary to define each of them¹:

- **Hire Above Midpoint (HAM):** The state utilizes a compensation program whereby classified positions, i.e. full-time (FTE) positions that are assigned to a classification, are assigned pay bands. There are 10 pay bands, and each pay band has a minimum, midpoint, and maximum salary (Appendix C). Agencies have the authority to hire individuals from the minimum of the pay band to the midpoint of the pay band. Any salary that exceeds the midpoint of a pay band has to be submitted to the DSHR for approval.
- **Promotional Increase > 15%:** An employee's salary may be increased up to 15% of his/her salary prior to the promotion or to the midpoint of the new pay band, whichever is greater. There are some situations in which an agency

¹ Source: 2010 State of South Carolina Human Resources Regulations

desires to offer an individual more than a 15% increase and above the midpoint of the pay band. In such cases, the agency must submit written justification to the DHSR for approval. The increase cannot, however, place the employee's salary over the maximum of the position's pay band.

- **Equivalency Request:** Each state job classification has an established minimum education, training, and/or experience requirement. If an agency seeks to hire an applicant that does not meet the state's minimum requirements for a position, the hiring agency is required to submit a written request, along with supporting documentation to the DSHR for review. The assigned HR Consultant may approve the equivalency request if it is determined that the applicant has a combination of education, training, and/or experience that equates to the state's minimum requirements.
- **Position Description Update:** A position description, or PD, is a statement of the major duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships of a position. It basically indicates the work to be performed by that particular position. Agencies have delegation authority to update PDs for job classifications that have a pay band of 6 and below, but must submit PDs for pay bands 7 and above to DSHR for review and approval.
- **Job Reclassification:** For a classified position, there may be instances where it needs to be assigned to another job classification as a result of natural or organizational changes in duties or responsibilities of the position. Agencies have delegation authority to reclassify jobs assigned to pay bands 6 and below.

However, requests for positions that are assigned to pay bands 7 and above must be submitted to the agency's assigned HR Consultant for approval.

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The HR Consultants primarily receive requests for review and approval from their assigned agencies via e-mail. Typically, the documents received consist of multiple pages, averaging anywhere between five (5) to 12 pages in length. The current process on how documents are handled upon receipt is paper and manually driven (e.g. physically placing an "Approved" stamp on documents along with a "wet signature" and date—Appendix B), and it involves a significant amount of paper generation. This, in turn, results in an accumulation of paper documents within the office due to the loss of staff who was dedicated to scanning and disposing of hard documents.

In addition, the current workflow process for reviewing, processing, and storing documents was evaluated for this project. In mapping out the workflow process, it reflects a process that is inefficient and duplicative in some steps (Appendix D).

This CPM project focuses on the document approval process that the agency consulting team utilizes as it relates to classification and compensation requests, e.g. job reclassifications, PD update requests, and salary requests. The ultimate goal is to become more efficient by utilizing electronic signatures and electronic form filling to streamline the current process of document approvals. In turn, a

streamlined process will be more cost effective and will improve the human resources services that the DSHR provides to other state agencies.

IV. DATA COLLECTION

During the data collection process, the cost and amount of copier paper and fees for printer supplies and maintenance were collected to gain insight primarily on the cost factor. Based on reviewing previous purchases orders, the DSHR generally orders 12 boxes of 8½" x 11" copier paper twice a year, and the total cost is approximately \$650. The cost factor for special paper types, e.g. 3-hole punched or size 8½" x 14", was not considered during data collection because the need for those is far less than the standard 8½" x 11" copier paper and averages from two (2) to six (6) reams of paper within a year. In addition, it was determined that in 2014, the DSHR spent \$4,250 on toner cartridges and \$1,325 for a maintenance contract.

Other data collected was the number of approvals for a selective group of actions that were processed by the agency consulting team from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015 (FY 2014/2015). It should be noted that there are other approvals that HR consultants also grant, such as band 7 and above PD updates, for which a count could not be readily collected. This is due to the limitations of the current OnBase electronic storage system, which does not offer a search or sort feature (Appendix E). Nonetheless, collecting the data for a selective group of actions that were processed last fiscal year still offers a depiction of the time spent and the volume of paper documents that were generated. Data was gathered on Hires above

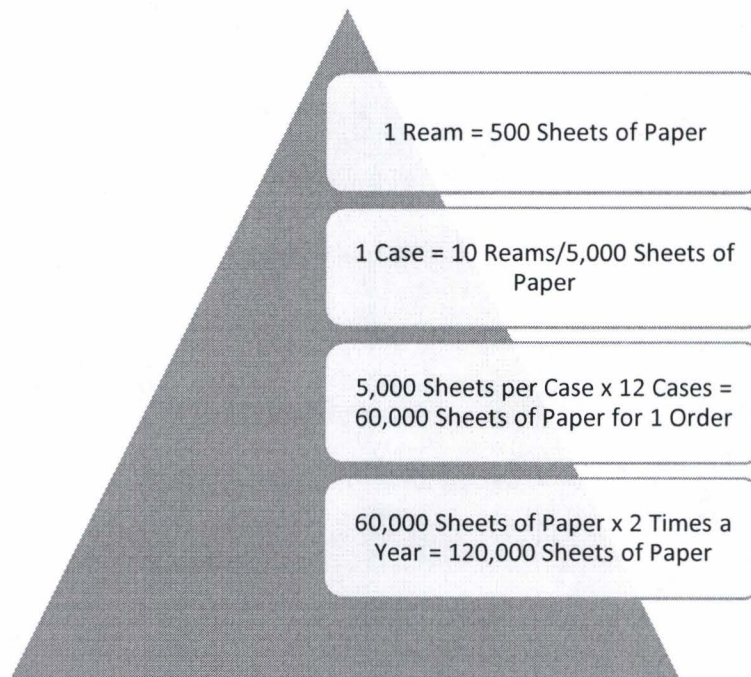
Midpoints, Promotional Increases > 15%, and Reclassification actions for bands 7 and above by utilizing a report from the South Carolina Enterprise Information System (SCEIS) and by researching the OnBase database for equivalency correspondence (Note: The number of equivalency requests received).

<u>ACTION TYPE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>
Hires above Midpoint	369
Reclassification Actions	934
Equivalency Approvals	137
TOTAL	1,440

As mentioned previously, the workflow process for document approval and storage was mapped (Appendix D). It is not uncommon for organizations to recognize that inefficiencies exists; however, sometimes the issue lies within how to improve those inefficiencies. Mapping the current process allows a visual depiction of internal processes and enables the office to better look at ways to reduce waste and cost and also how to improve efficiency. Therefore, having this visual representation of the current workflow process will allow management to not only recognize the inefficiencies but also to support implementing best practices that can be expanded within the organization in the future.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

In analyzing the amount and cost of ordering copier paper, the amount of paper ordered within a year was broken down for a visual perspective. The following graphic illustrates the amount of paper ordered in terms of reams, cases, and total sheets of paper:



While these numbers can vary depending on the needs of the agency, it can be determined that the amount of paper utilized throughout the organization is quite significant. The question may arise as to why there is such a high need for this amount of paper. As stated earlier in section IV, a total of 1,440 Hires above Midpoint, Promotional Increases > 15%, Reclassifications, and Equivalency actions alone were processed by the HR Consultants in FY 2014/2015.

So then the question becomes, what happens to the documents once they have been processed and electronically stored in OnBase? The agency does not have the need or space to maintain the hard copies. HR Consultants handle confidential information on a daily basis. Therefore, the DSHR has to outsource for shredding services. In October 2015, the agency spent \$450 for shredding services with Shred With Us. Approximately 4000 lbs. (2 tons) of documents were shredded for the agency. While not all of the documents were generated from the HR consulting area, it is a fair assumption that a great percentage of the documents shredded were generated within the agency consulting area based upon the number of actions reflected in the chart in section IV.

At the onset of this research, the plan was to also examine the costs related to printer supplies, maintenance fees, and shred service fees. It was later determined by management that the agency needed to change the process of (1) handling printer supplies and maintenance and (2) outsourcing for shredding services. In an effort to reduce cost, the agency obtained an agreement for printer maintenance, parts, and all toner cartridges for a flat rate of \$4,537 versus spending \$4,250 on toner cartridges and \$1,325 for maintenance. This change resulted in a cost savings of \$1,038. Agency management also decided that all staff would be responsible for shredding their own documents with the in-house shredder. While the changes made resulted in a cost savings for the organization, it also resulted in an additional time consuming task for the HR Consultants—shredding!

Another key finding was that the workflow process for approving and storing approved documents within the agency consulting area has some inefficiencies. The current work process consists of multiple steps. It also became apparent that some of the HR consultants handle the process of scanning approved documents differently, thereby duplicating the process of scanning for some staff (Appendix D). The inefficiency results from the intake process of receiving an electronic document evolving into the output of printed hard documents. The process becomes a manual process, involving printing, "wet signatures," and having to, at some point, shred printed documents.

VI. SOLUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Prior to submitting the topic proposal for this CPM project, discussion occurred among the agency consulting team, to include the HR Consultants, managers, as well as the Director, regarding the exploration of using electronic signatures and electronic form filling options. Staff members were very receptive to venturing into creating an electronic approval process.

A "quick and dirty" solution to addressing the inefficiencies and to streamlining the current HR work process within the agency consulting area is to utilize Adobe Reader for electronic signatures and electronic form fill options whenever feasible. The office already has the Adobe Reader software, which allows staff to receive and send PDF documents. However, the different functionalities of the software, such as digitally signing and electronically filling in fields, are not being utilized. The mere

fact that there is already a mechanism in place to start utilizing electronic signatures and electronic form filling options is a benefit to the agency as there would not be any upfront costs.

In working with the DSHR in-house IT Privacy/InfoSec Program Manager, utilizing Adobe Reader would not be any less secure than the current process that is being utilized. The next step of actually implementing the proposed workflow (Appendix F) is to present the findings of this research project to management and for management to render a final decision to adopt the suggested workflow. Upon this decision, the HR Consultants would need to be informed of the new workflow process and trained on how to access and utilize the digital signatures and form filling capabilities of Adobe Reader.

VII. EVALUATION METHOD

An effective evaluation mechanism after implementing the new workflow process would be to follow up with the key stakeholders, especially the HR Consultants. Dialogue should take place as to what works well with using Adobe Reader to electronically complete and approve agencies' requests and to discuss any issues the HR consultants encounter with the new workflow process. It would also be highly recommended to discuss any potential areas of improvement and/or changes that need to be made to the approval process. A good timeframe in which to gather feedback would be within 2 to 3 months after implementing the new process to address any issues early on in the process change. Feedback can be gathered via

a survey and/or in staff meetings where the agency consulting team could collaborate together on the approval process.

VIII. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The utilization of electronic signatures and electronic form filling options is becoming more widespread and can be found in use from private businesses, banks, insurance companies, and state and Federal government. Research indicates that the use of electronic signatures and electronic form filling capabilities is becoming more common in HR as employers find situations where “wet signatures” are not practical, such as handling open enrollment for employees spread across the country. In addition, electronic signatures can be commonly found in other areas of HR such as recruitment for applications or reference consents, benefits administration, payroll, and onboarding.² Certain segments of government within South Carolina already utilize a form of electronic signature, such as the Public Employee Benefits Authority (PEBA) with insurance open enrollment and NeoGov, the state’s online application system.

The demand for efficiency is driving adoption for integration of electronic signatures and electronic approvals. Both of these mechanisms: (1) Reduce operational costs by saving on the cost of paper, printers and accessories, man-hours, storage, and shredding; (2) Increase workflow efficiency and streamlines the signature and approval process by eliminating the need to print and/or scan

² Society for Human Resource Management, www.shrm.org

documents; and (3) Supports “green” initiatives be reducing or eliminating the need for paper.³

While the initial goal of this CPM project is to improve the workflow process within the agency consulting area of the DSHR, the hope is that the implementation of using electronic signatures and electronic approvals will spearhead initiatives to expand into other areas with the office. There may be situations when electronic signatures cannot be used, such as when a notary signature is required. There are also further legal considerations and best practices that will need to be considered with utilizing electronic signatures and electronic approvals should this idea expand into other areas. While initially Adobe Reader allows a less cumbersome and a cost effective way to implement the above-mentioned changes, a recommendation is that, in the future, the DSHR should research other software, including cloud based software that will allow the agency to meet internal needs and the needs of state agencies. Nonetheless, an electronic document approval process will benefit the DSHR and allow the HR Consultants to focus less on the clerical aspect of handling documents and more on servicing their assigned agencies.

³ “10 Benefits of Going Paperless,” www.govloop.com and “Electronic Signatures in the United States,” www.adobe.com

DIVISION OF STATE HUMAN RESOURCES (DSHR)



South Carolina
Department of Transportation

APPENDIX B

January 1, 2016

Ms. Tracey Bassard
Human Resources Consultant
Division of State Human Resources
8301 Parklane Road, Suite A220
Columbia, South Carolina 29223

Dear Tracey:

The purpose of my writing is to seek approval to hire Ms. Cruella de Vil above the midpoint of the pay band. Ms. de Vil has applied and been selected for the position of Trades Specialist II (KC20/02B/61039998). The Agency is requesting a salary of \$26,592, which is approximately 5.7% above the midpoint of Pay Band 02.

Ms. de Vil has a high school diploma and over sixteen (16) years of related trades experience.

I have attached a copy of the position description and her application for your review. Also, I have provided average salary data of other employees in the Trades Specialist II classification at the Agency.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this request. If additional information is required, please do not hesitate to contact me at 737-1730.

Sincerely,

Hazel Jones

Hazel Jones
Manager, Classification and Compensation

Attachments

APPROVED

DIVISION OF STATE HUMAN RESOURCES

Tracey Bassard

01/02/2016





South Carolina
Department of Transportation

APPENDIX B

January 1, 2016

APPROVED

DIVISION OF STATE HUMAN RESOURCES

Tracey Bassard

01/02/2016

Ms. Tracey Bassard
Division of Human Resources
8301 Parklane Road, Suite A220
Columbia, South Carolina 29223

Dear Tracey:

The purpose of my writing is to request an equivalency for Mr. Donald Duck. Mr. Duck has applied and been selected for the position of Engineer/Associate Engineer III (61039999/HD70/07A) in the Bamberg Maintenance Office. He is currently classified as an Engineer/Associate Engineer I in that office.

Mr. Duck does not meet the minimum training and experience required by the State classification specification. However, we believe that his education and experience qualify him to perform in this capacity. Mr. Duck possesses an Associate's Degree in Civil Engineering Technology from Walt Disney Technical College and has been employed with the Agency since 1999 in engineering-related capacities.

For your review, I have attached a copy of Mr. Duck's application and the associated position description. Please equate his background and experience to the State minimum training and experience requirements.

If you have questions or require additional information regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact me at 737-1730.

Sincerely,

Hazel Jones

Hazel Jones
Classification and Compensation Manager

Attachments



HC = 8601

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA POSITION DESCRIPTION

GENERAL INFORMATION

61039998
Position Number

U120
Agency Code

South Carolina Department of Transportation
Agency Name

ENG: PRE-CONSTRUCTION/REG. PROD.
GROUP 1 - LOWCOUNTRY/04101

Columbia/Richland/40

Division / Section / Unit

City / County / County Code

Vacant/

U120EHP101

Employee Name / Employee Number

Cost Center Data

Trades Specialist III / KC30 / 03A

Director of Engineering/HD80/61034421/
Supervisor State Title

Current State Title / Class Code / Band

Full / Part Time Indicator F

61034421

21001234

Hours Per Week 37.5

Supervisor Position No.

SCEIS Org. Unit

Base Hours 1950

SOURCE OF FUNDING

000

000

/00

State %

Federal %

Other %

REQUESTED ACTION INFORMATION

Reclassification +
transfer to 041.01

Engineer/Associate Engineer IV/08A/HD75/

Requested Action

Requested State Title / Class Code

Joe Green

2/1/2016

Hazel Jones

Supervisor's Signature

Date

Other Required Signature

Date

THE FOLLOWING SECTION OF THE POSITION DESCRIPTION IS TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SUPERVISOR

1. What are the minimum requirements for the position (Minimum requirements must at least meet the state minimum requirements for classified classes but may include additional requirements.)?

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: A bachelor's degree in engineering and six (6) years of journey-level engineering work experience, including one (1) year of experience in a technical supervisory capacity. Necessary Special Requirement: Requires registration as a
Professional Civil Engineer in the State of SC as prescribed in SC State Code Sections 40-22-20 and (CONTINUED ON ADDENDUM)

2. What knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed by an employee upon entry to this job including any special certification or license?

Advanced computer skills and knowledge of general applications (FMSP, P3e, Site Manager and HR Suite). Ability to reason, compare, understand and think rationally on the job concerning Agency and departmental policies and procedures. Ability to make quality work-related decisions based on sound conclusion/data. Ability to handle special assignments in a timely manner. (CONTINUED ON ADDENDUM)

3. Describe the guidelines and supervision an employee receives to do this job, including the employee's independence and discretion.

4. Indicate additional comments regarding this position (e.g. work environment, physical requirements, overnight travel).

Position requires occasional overnight travel and some evening work outside of the employee's normal work schedule.

☐ HRD COPY

☒ AGENCY COPY

HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

Agency Code

Class Code

Authorized Date

☐ Delegated

☐ New Position

☐ Prototype

☐ State Title Changes

☐ Update

☒ FLSA

Approved State Title

Approval Signature

Date Approved

Supervisory Position? Y

Call Back? N

Position in Headquarters? Y

On-Call? N

Position is: Non-Essential

2-2-2016

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS CONTINUED:

40-22-30. A valid motor vehicle operator's license is required.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES CONTINUED:

Appropriate written/verbal communication skills. Customer service principles, guidelines, and concepts. Detailed understanding of roadway and bridge design principles. Principles of effective human relations and dealing with the public. Detailed understanding of State and Federal guidelines for roadway and bridge projects to include the NEPA process. Detailed understanding of STIP, MPOs/COGs and/or CTCs. Detailed understanding of SCDOT project development process. Knowledge of HR/EPMS requirement. Extensive knowledge of SCDOT organization, policies, and procedures. Must be a registered Professional Engineer (PE) in South Carolina.

GUIDELINES AND SUPERVISION CONTINUED:

SUPERVISOR'S COMMENTS CONTINUED:

JOB PURPOSE CONTINUED:

<u>JOB FUNCTIONS CONTINUED:</u>	Essential/ Marginal (E or M)	Percentage of Time

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA POSITION DESCRIPTION

1. Job Purpose:

Manages major highway construction program(s) consisting of multiple projects. Management of the program includes directing the development of multiple projects, compliance with project schedules, and monitoring financial resources of the program.

2. Job Functions:

	Essential/ Marginal (E or M)	Percentage of Time
01. Program Development - Manages all aspects of the development of projects within the assigned MPO/COG programs including assisting with the TIP/STIP processes, conducting project scoping, preparing P2S approval requests, coordination and support of environmental documentation process, coordination of design and plan development support right-of-way acquisition, development and implementation of public involvement process, and support construction. Responsible for C-Project Development for all seven (7) counties in the Lowcountry RPG.	E	20
02. Develops, negotiates, manages, and recommends for execution various consultant contracts, participation agreements, and intergovernmental agreements.	E	15
03. Scheduling - Establishes project schedules and ensures compliance with schedules to deliver projects and programs in a timely manner. Provides project/program monthly status reports and updates on projects and programs, as required, including the updating of data management and reporting systems.	E	15
04. Funding - Monitors project and program funding, budgets and expenditures to ensure compliance with budget. Develops and implements strategies to contain cost of the projects and program.	E	15
05. Public Involvement - Coordinates and conducts public meetings as required. Develops and implements plan for projects. Represents SCDOT through presentations to government bodies, MPOs, COGs, CTCs, civic groups, community organizations, or individuals as needed.	E	10
06. Prepares correspondence and CTS responses related to assigned programs, projects, or geographic areas.	E	10
07. Acts on behalf of the Regional Production Engineer when necessary.	E	10
08. Performs other related duties as assigned.	M	5

3. Position's Supervisory Responsibilities:

If this position includes supervisory responsibilities, please indicate the state title and number of positions of the three highest subordinates.

	STATE TITLE	NUMBER	Number of employees directly supervised:	
(1)	Engineer/Associate Engineer III	03		08
(2)	Engineer/Associate Engineer II	04		
(3)	Administrative Assistant	01	Total number supervised:	08

4. Comments:

Vacant

5. The above description is an accurate and complete description of my job.

Employee's Signature

Date

THE LANGUAGE USED IN THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CREATE AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT BETWEEN THE EMPLOYEE AND THE AGENCY. THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CREATE ANY CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS OR ENTITLEMENTS. THE AGENCY RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVISE THE CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT, IN WHOLE OR IN PART. NO PROMISES OR ASSURANCES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, WHICH ARE CONTRARY TO OR INCONSISTENT WITH THE TERMS OF THIS PARAGRAPH CREATE ANY CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT.

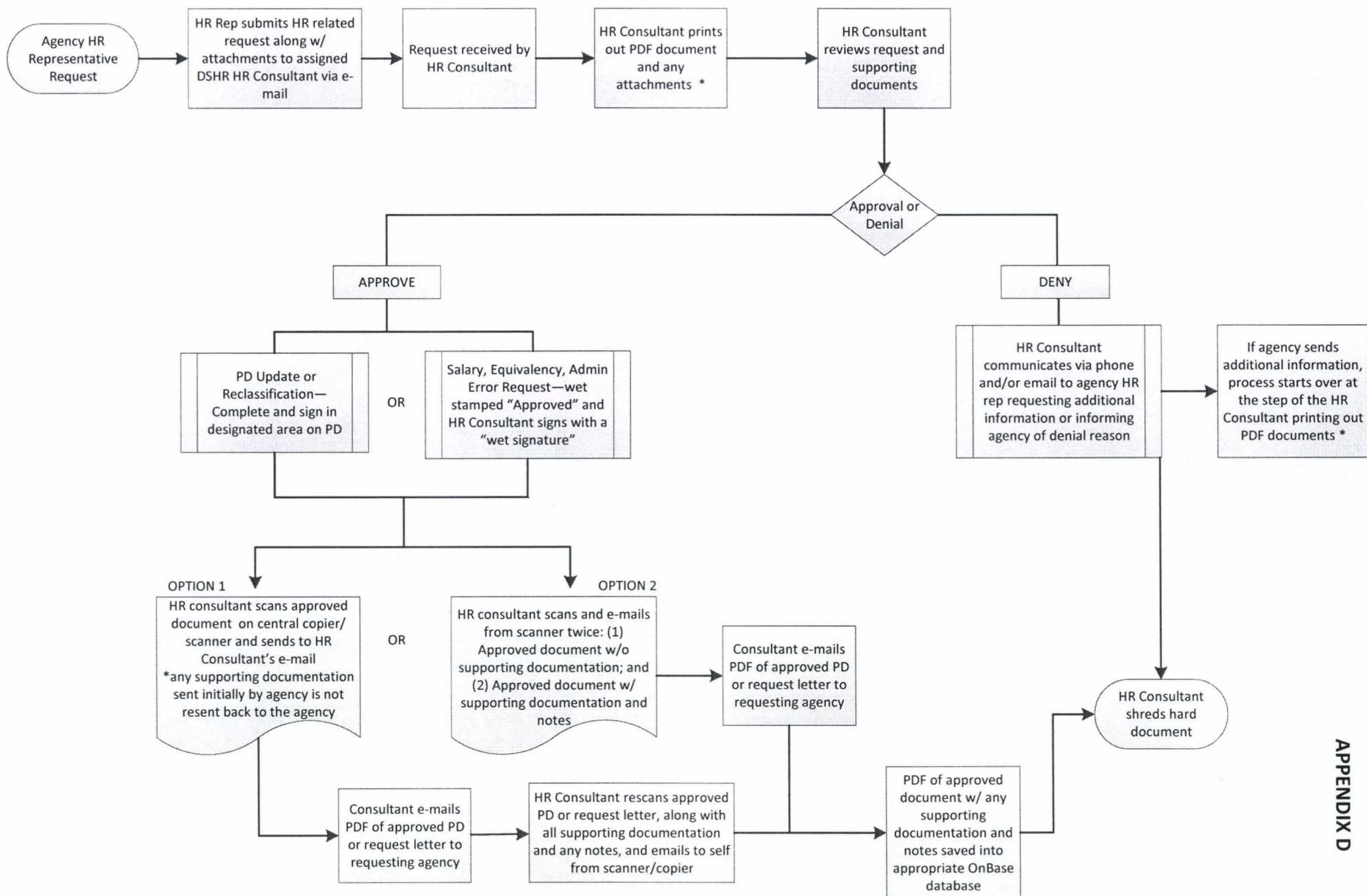
APPENDIX C

State of South Carolina Classified Pay Bands

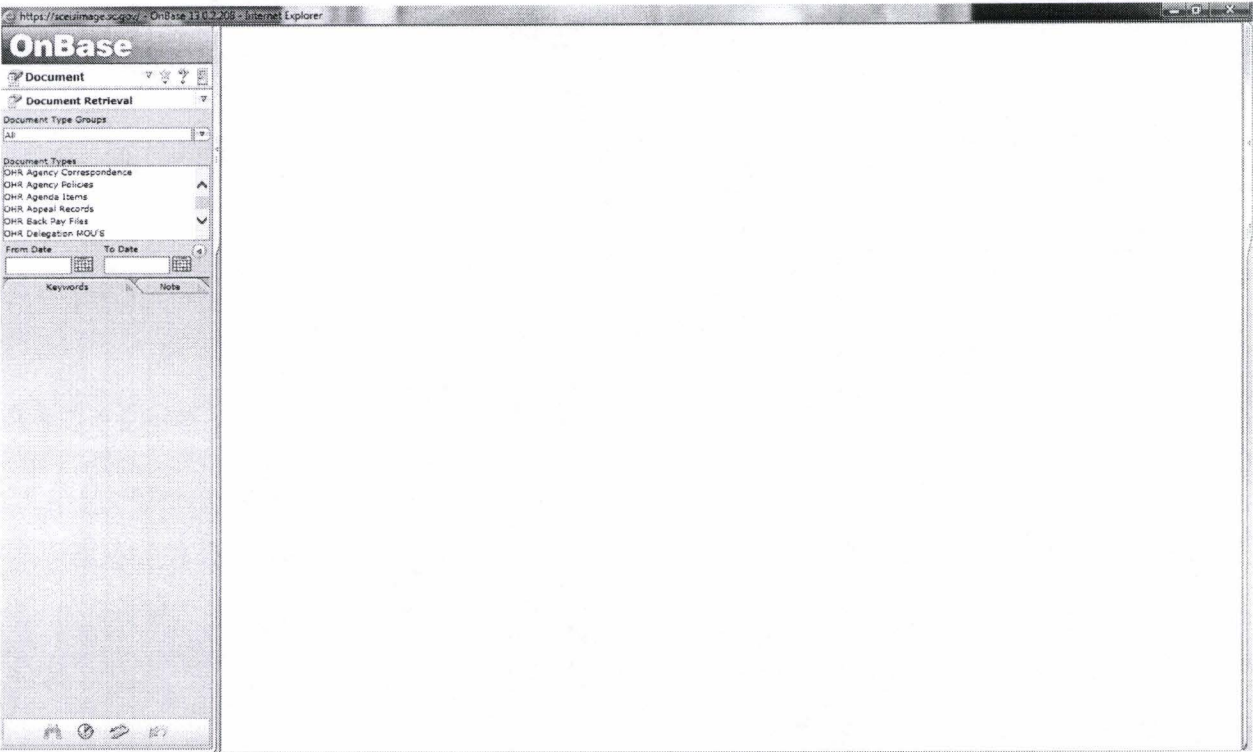
<u>Band</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Midpoint</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
01	\$15,080.00	\$20,959.00	\$26,838.00
02	\$17,656.00	\$25,161.00	\$32,667.00
03	\$21,484.00	\$30,619.00	\$39,754.00
04	\$26,139.00	\$37,250.00	\$48,361.00
05	\$31,805.00	\$45,326.00	\$58,848.00
06	\$38,703.00	\$55,155.00	\$71,608.00
07	\$47,092.00	\$67,108.00	\$87,125.00
08	\$57,299.00	\$81,655.00	\$106,012.00
09	\$69,717.00	\$99,352.00	\$128,987.00
10	\$84,828.00	\$120,884.00	\$156,941.00

Request from
Agency HR
Representative

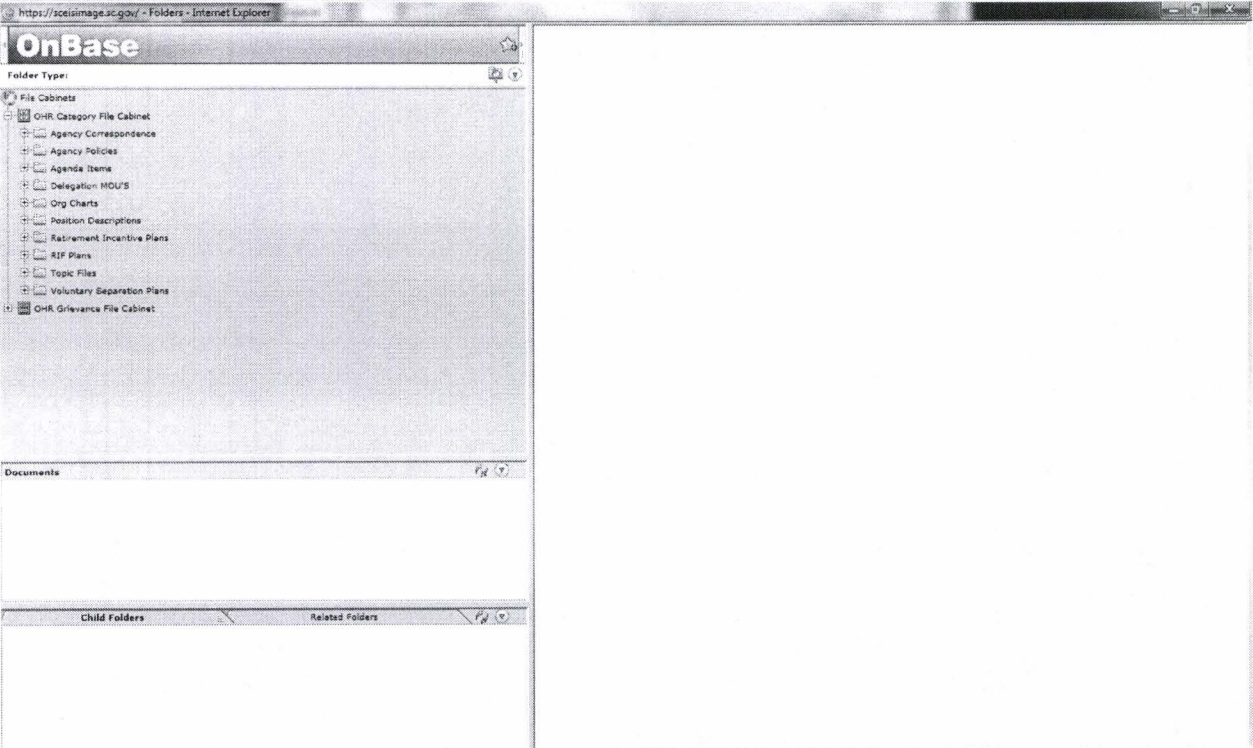
Current HR Workflow Process



SCREENSHOT OF OnBase PRIMARY/PARENT FOLDER



SCREENSHOT OF OnBase FOLDER TYPES



Request from
Agency HR
Representative

Proposed HR Workflow Process

